

FOSTERING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM

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Teachers face enormous challenges meeting both the academic and social-emotional needs of learners in their classrooms. In this article we discuss ways in which teachers can promote social-emotional learning. First, we discuss the construct of emotional intelligence and how it can be improved through social-emotional learning. We then review strategies teachers can use to improve learners' emotional, social, and interpersonal problem solving skills.

It is estimated that between 15 and 22 percent of U.S. youth have social-emotional difficulties warranting intervention (Cohen, 2001; Mogno & Rosenblitt, 2001). Students at risk for school failure are particularly vulnerable for social-emotional problems. For example, 75 percent of students with learning disabilities (LD) exhibit social skills deficits (Kavale & Forness, 1996), and the U.S. Department of Education (1996) reported that 29 percent of adolescents with disabilities required social skills instruction beyond high school.

Regular education classrooms include ever-increasing numbers of at-risk students. For example, special education students receive most, if not all, of their education in regular education classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). It is clear that teachers face enormous challenges meeting learners' academic and social-emotional needs. In this article we discuss ways in which teachers can promote social-emotional learning in their classrooms. First we discuss the construct of emotional intelligence and how it can be improved through social-emotional

learning. We then review strategies teachers can use to improve learners' emotional, social, and interpersonal problem solving skills.

Emotional Intelligence and Social-Emotional Learning

The term *emotional intelligence* was first used in 1990 by Salovey and Mayer, who offer this definition:

Emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 10).

Goleman (1995) popularized the construct of emotional intelligence in his book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. The term *EQ*, or emotional quotient, was coined by Bar-On (1997) to differentiate emotional intelligence from cognitive intelligence, which is measured by intelligence tests. EQ is

thought to be comprised of five domains (Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1997):

- knowing ones' emotions
- managing one's emotions
- motivating oneself
- recognizing emotions of others
- effectively using social skills when interacting with others

Less genetically determined than IQ, emotional intelligence can be taught by teachers and parents. Even more encouraging is that EQ skills overlap, creating a "spillover" effect: Teaching one skill improves other EQ skills. Social-emotional learning (or social-emotional education) involves using procedures and methods to promote EQ.

Within two years after publication of Goleman's book, more than 700 school districts implemented social emotional learning (SEL) programs designed to teach students social-emotional skills (Ratnesar, 1997). SEL programs focus on emotional awareness, social skills, and interpersonal problem solving (Cohen, 2001). In the sections that follow, we discuss ways in which teachers can foster social-emotional learning in their classrooms.

Emotional Awareness

The ability to perceive and understand emotions develops with age. Children as young as three can identify sadness, happiness, and fear using nonverbal cues such as facial expression, gestures, and voice tone (Nabuzoka & Smith, 1995). At this age they begin to understand causes of feelings. However, children who are at risk for school failure may only acquire these skills

through direct instruction (Gumpel & Wilson, 1996; Most & Greenbank, 2000). In addition, many children (and some adults) may require help in understanding subtle shifts in emotion represented by family groupings as identified by Bodine and Crawford (1999):

Anger: Fury, outrage, resentment, wrath, exasperation, indignation, vexation, acrimony, animosity, annoyance, irritability, hostility

Sadness: Grief, sorrow, cheerlessness, gloom, melancholy, self-pity, loneliness, dejection, despair (p. 82)

Understanding one's own emotions is prerequisite to self control and anger management (Bodine & Crawford, 1999). Understanding the emotions of others is essential if learners are to read social situations accurately and respond to them appropriately. Without emotional understanding, students will misread the behaviors of others. Teachers can help learners increase their emotional understanding by teaching nonverbal communication skills and by becoming emotion coaches.

Nonverbal Communication Skills

Most (i.e., 93%) of emotional meaning is conveyed without words: Fifty-five percent through facial expressions, body posture, and gestures, and thirty-eight percent through tone of voice (Mehrabian, 1968). In order to understand one's emotions and the emotions of others, learners must have adequate nonverbal communication skills. Nowicki and Duke (1992) and Duke, Nowicki, and Martin (1996) identified six areas of nonverbal commu-

nication: paralanguage, facial expressions, postures and gestures, interpersonal distance (space) and touch, rhythm and time, and objectics. Instructional goals are for learners to recognize nonverbal messages of others and to effectively express themselves nonverbally. Teachers can reach these goals by using activities described in Table 1.

Paralanguage. Paralanguage is comprised of nonword sounds that convey meaning. Examples include tone of voice, rate of speech, emphasis and variation in speech, and nonverbal sound patterns such as "mmmmmmmm.." Learners need to understand how voice tone conveys emotion. In order to avoid cognitive conflict voice tone and words must match. Similarly, learners need to recognize that speech rate conveys emotion. They also should be aware of their own speech rate and be able to adjust it to meet listeners' needs. Emphasis and variation in speech conveys and changes meaning. The sentence "I didn't say you stole the car," takes on different meanings depending on which word is emphasized:

I didn't say you stole the car.
 I didn't *say* you stole the car.
 I didn't say *you* stole the car.
 I didn't say you *stole* the car.
 I didn't say you stole the *car*.

Facial Expressions. People are expected to look at other's faces during conversation, and learners may need to be taught to engage in eye contact. Ability to read facial expressions is related to understanding that the face includes three zones: forehead and eyes, nose and cheeks, and

mouth. Awareness of facial zones and the resting face (a person's unconscious facial expression) can be taught directly.

Postures and Gestures. Learners must learn to interpret postures and gestures and to use them appropriately. For example, the teacher may regard a student as bored and disinterested by how that student sits in class.

Interpersonal Distance (Space) and Touch. Hall (1966) identified four spatial zones among Americans: intimate zone (i.e., nearly touching to 18 inches away), personal zone (i.e., 18 inches to 4 feet away), social zone (i.e., 4 to 12 feet away), and public zone (i.e., 12 feet and more). Learners need to be taught about these zones as violating a zone may result in a serious faux pas. Learners who respect classmates' personal space are more accepted by peers and are less apt to get into difficulty when working with others. Learners also need to know about mental space that holds private topics. Learning to read people to determine if they feel that their mental space has been invaded is a useful skill. Finally, students also must learn what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate touching.

Rhythm and Time. Some principles of rhythm and time students need to understand and practice include being in sync with others, managing time, arriving on time, and knowing the difference between private and public time. Students need to be able to read messages conveyed through others' use of time (e.g., being made to wait in the doctor's office) and have their use of time match the intended message (e.g., spending time with friends means you care about them). Many learners need

Table 1
Activities for Teaching Nonverbal Communication Skills

Activities for Teaching Nonverbal Communication Skills

Area of Nonverbal Communication	Activity
Paralanguage	
Tone of Voice	Identify emotions when teacher reads sentence using different voice tones. Read a script when given different situations surrounding different emotions.
Nonverbal Sound Patterns	Use different types of paralanguage to express feelings.
Rate of Speech	Match rate with emotions such as happy, angry, sad. Tape voice and count number of words spoken per minute; compare with others.
Facial Expressions	Demonstrate "resting face." Make facial expressions to convey different emotions. Identify emotions conveyed by people in public, on TV, and in magazines.
Postures and Gestures	Assemble a dictionary of gestures/postures conveying specific emotions. Demonstrate postures under formal/informal situations.

Table 1 (cont.)
Activities for Teaching Nonverbal Communication Skills

Activities for Teaching Nonverbal Communication Skills

Area of Nonverbal Communication	Activity
Interpersonal Distance and Touch	<p>Identify types of conversations that should/should not occur in each spatial zone.</p> <p>Discuss feelings when personal space is invaded.</p> <p>Demonstrate a touch for an emotion when role playing.</p>
Rhythm and Time	<p>Estimate length of time to complete activities.</p> <p>Keep track of number of times late or on time.</p> <p>Describe examples of public and private time.</p>
Objectics	<p>Develop dress codes for specific situations and use magazine pictures to illustrate.</p> <p>Describe image conveyed by dress when observing people in public.</p> <p>Develop dictionary of 'in' styles.</p>

direct instruction in how to estimate and manage time.

Objectics. Objectics includes style of dress and hair, use of jewelry and cosmetics, and personal hygiene that allow learners to fit in with a group. Learners need to understand the difference between image (self perception) and impression (other's perception of an individual). Objectics are particularly important for young adolescents, whose desire to fit in is overpowering. Teachers and parents should not pretend to understand preadolescent and adolescent fashion rules, but should rely instead on observing children in school and magazines, at the mall, and on TV. Students may need to be taught how to dress to convey their desired image and how to dress for different situations.

Emotion Coaching

Once learners acquire adequate nonverbal communication skills, emotional understanding can be further improved through use of *emotion coaching*, a technique developed by John Gottman (1997). Teachers and parents acting as emotion coaches can use a five-step process to provide guidance about emotions. Parents and teachers first need to be aware of the learner's emotion. Gottman recommends that adults put the child's situation into an adult context. For example, how we feel when our boss dresses us down during a staff meeting is similar to how a child feels when a teacher reprimands the child in front of the class. Step Two involves recognizing uncomfortable emotions as teaching opportunities and discussing feelings rather than punishing or criticizing. Emotions are validated rather than evaluated during Step Three. Step Four involves helping the learner label his emotion. The skills learned during

nonverbal communication lessons will help learners use words to label how they feel. The final step involves helping the learner solve the problem that led to the feeling. Problem solving is discussed in detail elsewhere in this article.

Social Skills

Adequate interpersonal skills are an important component of emotional intelligence. Types of social skills include *interpersonal behaviors* needed to make and keep friends, such as joining in and giving compliments; *peer-related social skills* valued by classmates, such as sharing and working cooperatively; *teacher-pleasing social skills* related to academic success, such as listening and following directions; *self-related behaviors*, such as following through and dealing with stress; *communication skills* such as attending to the speaker and conversational turn taking; and *assertiveness skills* (Elksnin & Elksnin, 1998). Learners demonstrate two types of social skills problems: acquisition problems and performance problems.

Acquisition Problems

An acquisition problem occurs when a learner lacks specific social skills. Each social skill must be taught directly. Teachers can prepare to teach a social skill by providing the learner with a definition of the skill, the steps required to perform the skill, a rationale for learning the skill, situations in which to use the skill, role play situations in which to practice the skill, and social rules that govern skill use (see Elksnin & Elksnin, 1995). Figure 1 is an instructional planning sheet for teaching the social skill "asking the teacher for help."

Figure 1.
Instructional Planning Sheet for "Asking for Help"

Skill: Asking the teacher for help
Definition of Skill: Asking the teacher for help means that you need the teacher to explain something or answer a question about your work.

- Skill Step:*
1. Make sure you need help.
 2. If you need help, raise your hand.
 3. Wait quietly for the teacher to call on you.
 4. Explain why you need help when the teacher calls on you.
 5. Listen while the teacher explains.
 6. Ask the teacher to explain in a different way if you don't understand.
 7. Listen while the teacher explains.
 8. Thank the teacher.
 9. Continue to work on your assignment

"Body Basics" (verbal and nonverbal behaviors that occur throughout the skill)

1. Make eye contact with the teacher.
2. Look interested.
3. Use a pleasant tone of voice.

Rationale Statements

If you ask the teacher for help you will understand what is being taught.
If you don't ask the teacher for help you may not be able to complete your assignment.

Situations in Which To Use Skill

You do not understand something the teacher says, does, or writes.
You do not understand directions.
You do not understand something in one of your books.

Role-Play Scenarios

1. You are trying to complete a math worksheet in class and you do not understand how to do the problems even after you have read the directions a couple of times.
2. You are listening to the teacher talk about the sequence of events in a story and you do not understand what that means even though you have listened carefully the whole time.

Role-Play Instructional Sequence

1. Teacher role plays/learners critique.
2. Learners role play/learners critique. (All learners role play every skill!)
3. Teacher gives learners feedback.

Social Rules

1. Do not ask for help unless you really need it.
 2. Wait to ask for help if the teacher is busy.
 3. If you can't get help right away, try working on something you can do.
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Social skills are taught during role playing. The teacher first performs each skill step while talking out loud to model cognitive decisions. The teacher then guides the learner through the skill while providing specific, informative feedback to improve performance. Finally, the teacher provides opportunities for the learner to independently practice the skill. Many social skills curricula are available. A well-developed social skills program provides a taxonomy of social skills, along with analyses of skills steps. Table 2 provides a list of programs designed for use at the elementary and secondary levels.

Performance Problems

Performance problems occur when the learner knows how to perform the skill yet fails to do so. Causes of performance problems include failure to determine when to use a skill or failure to receive adequate reinforcement for skill use. In the first case, coincidental teaching can be used to encourage students to practice skills. In the second case, classmates can be recruited to praise the learner for using the skill.

Coincidental teaching. Coincidental teaching involves teaching social skills as situations occur in the natural environment (Schulze, Rule, & Innocenti, 1989). Teachers can use coincidental teaching in their classrooms and teach parents to use it at home. The first step is to identify social skills to target during the day and situations that call for skill use. For example, the teacher may identify "sharing" as the target skill and cooperative groups and free play as situations likely to require sharing. After situations are identified, the teacher determines times during the day that are

supportive of coincidental teaching. For example, while the teacher is actively monitoring cooperative learning groups may not be the best time to coincidentally teach social skills. Once appropriate situations and times are identified, the teacher looks for opportunities for learners to use the skill, prompts learners to use the skill, and praises learners following skill use. Teaching parents to coincidentally teach provides students with even more practice opportunities (Elksnin & Elksnin, 2000).

Peer reinforcement. Often learners who perform social skills fail to receive reinforcement from classmates. These learners may even be punished for past mistakes (Scott & Nelson, 1998). In these situations, teachers must recruit peer support. Two examples of peer-mediated interventions illustrate the power of the peer group to enhance social skills performance. The first example is positive peer reporting, which involves reinforcing peers with tokens when they publicly praise appropriate social behavior. Jones, Young, and Friman (2000) taught peers to give positive feedback to socially rejected, delinquent adolescents by looking at the learner, smiling, stating a positive thing the learner did or said, and verbally praising the learner. Steps were posted on class bulletin boards as reminders. Peer acceptance of rejected learners improved and the number of positive statements made by their peers increased. In a second study, elementary-aged learners were taught how to recognize socially appropriate behavior (Skinner, Cashwell, & Skinner, 2000). They then were asked to "tootle," or tell the teacher when peers behaved in a socially appropriate manner, rather than "tattle," or tell

Table 2
Social Skills Curricula

Social Skills Curricula

Program/Year of Publication

Author(s)

Publisher

Elementary Curricula

I Can Problem Solve* (2001a, 2001b, 2001c)

Shure

Research Press

Connecting with Others (1996a, 1996b, 1996c)

Combs-Richardson, Evans, & Meisgeier

Research Press

Skillstreaming in Early Childhood (2003)

McGinnis & Goldstein

Research Press

Skillstreaming the Elementary School Child (1997)

McGinnis & Goldstein

Research Press

Social Skills in the Classroom (1992)

Stephens

PAR

Social Skills Activities for Special Children (1993)

Mannix

Center for Applied

Research in Education

Taking Part (1991)

Cartledge & Kleeefeld

AGS

Think Aloud (1985a, 1985b, 1985c)*

Camp & Bash

Research Press

Working Together (1994)

Cartledge & Kleeefeld

AGS

Table 2 (cont.)
Social Skills Curricula*Social Skills Curricula*Program/Year of PublicationAuthor(s)Publisher*Secondary Curricula*

ASSET: A Social Skills Program for Adolescents (1996)

Hazel, Schumaker, Sherman, & Sheldon

Research Press

CLASSIC (1993)

Dygdon

CPPC

The PREPARE Curriculum (1997)

Goldstein

Research Press

Skillstreaming the Adolescent (1997)

Goldstein & McGinnis

Research Press

Waksman Social Skills Curriculum (1998)

S. Waksman & D.D. Waksman

PRO-ED

*Problem-Solving Program

the teacher when peers did or said something inappropriate. Socially appropriate behavior of students in this fourth-grade classroom increased substantially.

Problem Solving

In addition to possessing adequate social skills, emotionally intelligent learners are effective social problem solvers (Slavin & Madden, 2001). Problem solving can and should be taught, and it is important for teachers to model problem solving by "thinking out loud." Learners can be taught to problem solve using this sequence (D'Zurilla and Goldfried, 1971):

1. Define the problem.
2. Generate possible solutions.
3. Select a solution.
4. Predict outcomes if solution is implemented.
5. Select an alternative solution if predicted outcome is not positive.
6. Evaluate outcome after solution is implemented.
7. Decide what to do in a similar situation.

The FIG TESPN Routine and Social Skill Autopsies are two approaches that incorporate these steps that are especially useful in the classroom.

FIG TESPN Routine. Elias, Tobias, and Friedlander (1999) developed the FIG TESPN Routine as a process parents and children can use to solve social problems. Teachers also can use this routine. The eight steps of FIG TESPN include

1. **Feelings** cue me to thoughtful action.
2. **I** have a problem.

3. **Goal** gives me a guide.
4. **Think** of things I can do.
5. **Envision** outcomes.
6. **Select** my best solution.
7. **Plan** the procedure, anticipate pitfalls, practice, and pursue it.
8. **Notice** what happened, and now what? (p. 132).

During step one, learners are taught that bad feelings signal a problem that needs to be solved. Learners are taught that problems cannot be solved effectively without labeling the emotion or the bad feeling. The teacher can use many of the strategies discussed earlier to increase emotional understanding. Step Two emphasizes that the learner "owns" the problem. He may not have caused the problem, but it is his responsibility to solve it. During this step, learners also learn that actions, not feelings, solve problems. Step Three focuses on goal setting to direct actions and reduce stress. Learners generate possible solutions during Step Four. Learners are taught that every action has consequences during Step Five. Based on predicted outcomes learners select a solution to the problem during Step Six. The original problem is revisited at this point. Step Seven emphasizes that problems are likely to occur when implementing any plan. By anticipating problems before implementing a plan, learners are less likely to become discouraged. During the final step of FIG TESPN, learners self-evaluate and are taught that not all plans will be successful. Several curricula that focus on interpersonal problem solving also are available (see Table 2).

Social Skill Autopsies. Lavoie (1994) recommends using social skill autopsies after the learner experiences a negative (or positive) social outcome. Autopsies involve analyzing the events surrounding a social outcome by asking the learner what she did, what happened when she did it, and what she will do in a similar situation based upon the positive or negative direction of the outcome. Autopsies should only be conducted privately and only after the learner has dealt with her emotions. For this reason, they can be used as part of the emotion coaching process. The obvious advantage of social skill autopsies is that they can be used any time and any place. If school personnel and parents "autopsy" social behavior, learners will become more skillful interpersonal problem solvers.

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence may be as important as, or even more important than, cognitive intelligence. Many learners, particularly those at risk for school failure, do not possess the social-emotional skills needed to be emotionally intelligent. However, these skills can and should be taught. In this article we reviewed ways in which teachers can improve learners' emotional understanding, social skills, and interpersonal problem-solving ability. Social-emotional learning enables learners to effectively "understand, process, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of [their] lives" (Cohen, 2001, p. 3).

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